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ABSTRACT

A booklet for limited English speakers on renting housing provides information on searching for housing, finding the right place, considerations before signing a lease, and relations with the landlord. Cartoons, questions about the message in cartoons and narrative passages, checklists on things to consider, and the phonetic pronunciation of key words are presented. Specific topics include the following: (1) charges for utilities, and other costs such as parking space fees or trash pickup; (2) what is meant by a security deposit; (3) renting a room, an apartment, a studio apartment versus those with one or two bedrooms, a house, or a mobile home; (4) ways to find housing including looking on one's own, using managing agents, real estate agencies, and rental referrals; (5) abbreviations used in classified ads; (6) considering priorities such as the need for space, special services, or privacy; (7) things to consider in checking out the neighborhood, the apartment, and the building; (8) provisions in the lease including rules for tenants, the right of the landlord to enter the renter's home, and renter's responsibilities; and (9) problems that occur and recourse through enforcement on housing codes. (SW)

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RENTING IT RIGHT

by

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Contents

INTRODUCTION 3

CHAPTER ONE HUNTING FOR HOUSING 7

CHAPTER TWO FINDING THE RIGHT PLACE 15

CHAPTER THREE BEFORE YOU SIGN 21

CHAPTER FOUR YOU AND YOUR LANDLORD 27

Introduction

Need somewhere to live?

What should you do?

You can't afford to buy?

Then renting is for you!

What is renting all about? How can you find a place to rent? How much should you pay? What is a lease? How do you get along with your landlord?

Do you have questions like these? Will you soon rent a place to live?

This workbook will help answer your questions. It will help you decide what you need and want. It will show you how to look for a place to rent. It will tell you what to look for.

LANDLORDS AND TENANTS

What is a landlord?

A landlord is someone who owns property. The landlord lets someone else live in the property. The person who rents the property pays money to the landlord.

What is a tenant?

When you rent, you are called a **tenant** (TĚN ĕnt). Tenant comes from the Latin word for *hold*. You hold or live in property that is owned by someone else. Two or more people who rent a home together are called "joint tenants."

How do you become a tenant?

You make an agreement with an owner. The owner agrees to rent to you. The owner becomes your landlord. You agree to pay the landlord money. The money that you pay is called rent.

You may pay the rent to the landlord. Or you may pay the rent to an agent. Many times a real estate agent is hired by a landlord. The agent finds tenants for the landlord's property. The agent also collects rents for the landlord.

What is a lease?

A **lease** (LĒS) is the agreement between landlord and tenant. Usually a lease is written on one or more sheets of paper. Both the landlord and the tenant sign two copies of the lease. The tenant keeps one copy. The landlord keeps the other copy.

What are references?

Sometimes, a landlord may want to know more about you before renting a house or apartment to you. If so, he or she will ask you for some **references** (RĚF ə rĕn sĕs). References are names of people who know you. They can tell the landlord if you are an honest person. They can tell the landlord if you pay your bills on time. They can tell the landlord if you will be a good tenant.

CHECK YOURSELF

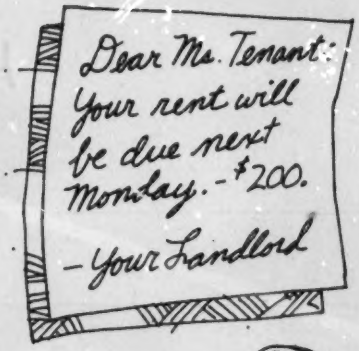
Do you know these words now? Use them to fill in the blanks.

tenant landlord lease rent agent references

1. The _____ owns the property for rent.
2. The agreement between landlord and tenant is the _____.
3. Money the tenant pays is called _____.
4. A _____ does not own his home.
5. A person who collects rent for a landlord is called an _____.
6. Names of people who know you are called _____.

6

WHAT YOU PAY WHEN YOU RENT



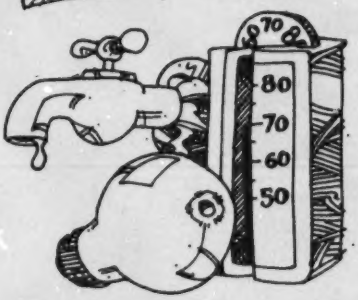
Rent

When you are a tenant, you pay rent. Usually you pay rent once a month.

Utilities

Sometimes your rent includes **utilities** (ū TĬL ĭ tēs). Utilities are things that you use: gas, electricity, water, heating oil. If your rent includes utilities, you don't pay extra for them.

Sometimes rent does not cover utilities. This means that you pay extra for utilities. The electric company sends you a bill. You will also get a bill if you use gas for cooking or heating. Sometimes your rent will include some utilities, but not others. Then you will have to pay for the utilities that are not included in your rent.



Other fees

Sometimes when you rent, you must pay other fees. You might have to pay extra for a parking space. You might have to pay for trash pickup.

Be sure you find out your TOTAL monthly rent payment.
Rent + Utilities + Other fees = Total monthly payment

Jerry Jones's rent each month is	$280
His heating and electricity each month cost	$ 60
His parking space each month costs	$ 16
His trash pickup each month costs	$ 6
Jerry Jones's total monthly rent payment is	$362

How much should you pay when you rent?

Here is a good rule. Don't spend more than one week's take-home pay. The total you spend on housing each month should not be more than one week's take-home pay.

What is a security deposit?

Renters usually must make a **security deposit** (sē CŬR ĭ tē dĭ PŌZ ĭt). This is usually equal to one month's rent. If your rent is $275 each month, your security deposit would be $275. The landlord keeps your deposit while you are a tenant. When you leave, the landlord sees if you have damaged or broken anything. If everything is OK, you get your deposit back. If you have damaged the property or broken something, the landlord keeps all or part of your deposit. The landlord may also keep your deposit if you don't pay rent that you owe when you leave.

When you rent,
you will need enough money for:

A security deposit
(usually 1 month's rent)

PLUS

Your first month's rent

Can you answer these questions?

1. An apartment rents for $200 a month, utilities included. What is the total monthly payment? $ _____ You must make a security deposit of one month's rent. How much is the security deposit? $_____

2. Your apartment rents for $300 a month. Your electric bill is about $20 a month. Your landlord charges you $10 a month to park your car. What is your total rent payment each month? $_____

3. Apartment A rents for $225 a month. Utilities are included.
   Apartment B rents for $175. The monthly gas bill (this includes heat) is $45, and electricity is $15 a month.

   Which apartment would be cheaper to rent? A or B. Circle your answer.

Chapter 1

HUNTING FOR HOUSING

There all kinds of places to rent. When you hunt for a place to rent, here's what you might find.

Room

You could rent a room. You might have a private bathroom. Or you might have to share a bathroom. You might rent a room in a private house. Sometimes you can use the kitchen. This is called "kitchen **privileges**". (PRĬV ĭ lĕ gĕs). You might rent a room in a **residence** (RĔZ ĭ dĕnz) hall. This has many rooms for rent. The hall may have a dining room that serves meals.

A room usually costs less to rent than an apartment. If you rent a room, you may not have to sign a written lease. Also, you may be able to rent a room by the week. This would be good if you only needed a place for a short time.

What would you like about renting a room? _____

_____

_____

What would you not like about renting a room? _____

_____

_____

Apartment

An apartment has one or more rooms. When an apartment has more rooms, the rent will be higher. An apartment has its own door (or entrance) and its own bath. Usually it has a kitchen. Apartments come in many sizes.

Studio apartments (STŌŌ dē ō)

These are also called **efficiencies** (ĕf FĬSH ĕn sēs). A studio apartment has one room for living, sleeping and eating. It also has a bathroom and a small kitchen or cooking area.

Have you ever been in a studio apartment? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you know anyone who rents a studio apartment? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Apartments with one or more bedrooms

These have a living room, bathroom, kitchen and one or more bedrooms. There may also be a dining room.

Apartments are found in many kinds of buildings. Some apartments are in private houses. Others may be on the floor above a store or business. Some are in buildings where there are many apartments.

Apartment buildings are different. Some have only a few stories. These are called "garden apartments." Other apartment buildings have many stories. They are called "high rise" apartments. Some apartment buildings have swimming pools or tennis courts.

House

You may want to rent a house instead of an apartment. If you rent a house, you may have to pay for utilities. You may have to pay for gas, and/or electricity. You may also have to pay for water and for trash pickup. You may also have to do yard work. You may have to mow the lawn and shovel snow. You may have to clean the gutters.

Mobile Home (MŌ bīl hōm)

You can rent a mobile home. Most mobile homes are in the country and in small towns. Many are in mobile home parks. Mobile homes come in different sizes and models.

Renting a mobile home is much like renting a house. You have to pay for utilities. You may have to do some work to maintain the mobile home.

Are there mobile homes for rent where you live? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you know anyone that rents a mobile home? ☐ Yes ☐ No

HUNTING ON YOUR OWN

Here are some ways to hunt for a place to rent.

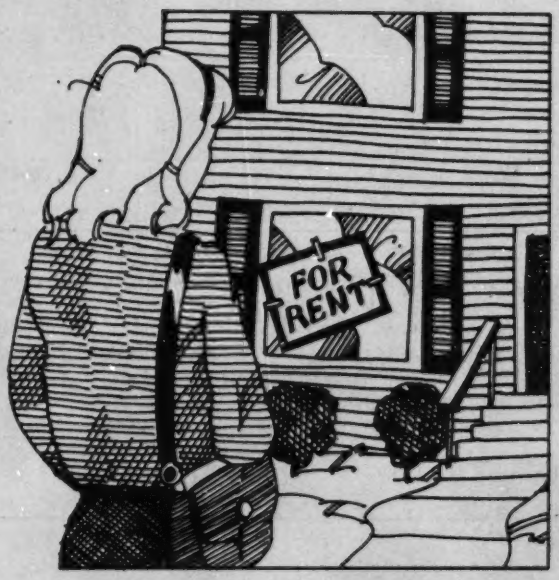
Use your feet.

Walk around neighborhoods you like. Look for signs saying FOR RENT. Look at bulletin boards in stores. Go in apartment buildings and ask if there are **vacancies** (VĀ căn sēs). A vacancy is a place open for rent.

Where would you walk if you were hunting for a place to rent?

_____

_____



Use your mouth.

Talk to people. Tell them you are looking for a place to rent. Ask them for ideas. Do they know a good, safe place to rent? Do they know someone who is leaving an apartment?

Who would you talk to? _____

_____

_____

Use your eyes.

Read newspaper ads. The want ads tell what is for rent. Use city newspapers. Use small local newspapers. Usually newspapers have more ads on weekends.

What newspapers would you use? _____

_____

_____

WHO CAN HELP YOU HUNT?

Sometimes you may be in a hurry to find a place to live. Sometimes you move to a new town. You need someone to help you. Here's what you should know before you ask for help.

Managing agents (MĂN ə jĭng Ā jĕnts)

Managing agents work for owners of apartment buildings. They manage or run the buildings. It is part of their job to find tenants. They will not charge you a fee. There is often a sign on an apartment building. The sign tells the name of the managing agent. Talk to the agent. Ask if there are apartments for rent.

Real estate agencies

Real estate agencies know about many places for rent. They charge for their help. Sometimes the landlord pays the fee. Sometimes the tenant pays the fee. The fee is usually equal to one month's rent. If you want to rent a house, a real estate agency is a good place to start looking. Be sure to find out if you have to pay a fee. Ask how much the fee is.

Rental referral (rĕ FĔR ăl)

These ask you to sign a contract and pay a fee. After you pay, you are given a list of places for rent. You have to check out the places yourself. You are paying the agency for the list.

Some people have had a bad time with agencies like these. The lists were not helpful. They were out-of-date. Before you sign a contract, find out about the agency. Call the Better Business Bureau where you live. Ask if there have been complaints about the agency.

TEST YOURSELF

Read these sentences. Circle T if the sentence is true. Circle F if it is false.

1. It won't cost you to use a rental referral agency. T F
2. Managing agents will help you free of charge. T F
3. You always have to pay a fee if a real estate agency helps you. T F

WORKING WITH WANT ADS

Newspapers can help you find a place to rent. Look in the want ads section. The want ads tell what is for rent.

Want ads use short forms of words. These are called **abbreviations** (ə brē vē Ā shŭns). If you learn these abbreviations, you can read the ads.

Here are some abbreviations. Can you guess what they mean? Match each abbreviation with the word it stands for. Draw lines. The first one is done for you.

apt	air conditioned
furn	bedroom
lge	apartment
rm	bathroom
br	furnished
ba	large
A/C	room

Here is a want ad for an apartment:

> Stu apt, unfurn, 2nd flr,
> w/w crp, all utils, $285

Tl e ad is for a studio apartment (stu apt). It is unfurnished (unfurn). It is on the second floor (2nd flr). It has wall to wall carpeting (w/w crp). The landlord pays for the heating, water, and electricity (all utils). The monthly rent is $285.

How did you do?

Here are some more abbreviations. Here are the words they stand for. Beside each abbreviation, write the word or words that mean the same.

utilities	unfurnished	building
studio	near	half bath
parking	security deposit	including

1. pkg _____
2. utils _____
3. ½ ba _____
4. sec dep _____
5. unfurn _____
6. nr _____
7. stu _____
8. bldg _____
9. incl _____

Here are some more abbreviations. Draw a line from each abbreviation to the right word or words. The first one has been done for you.

crp (cpts)	kitchen
drps	washer and dryer
d/wshr	elevator
kit	references
dwtn	laundry
gar (gdn)	dishwasher
lndry	wall to wall carpeting
elev	drapes
refrig	garden
refs	refrigerator
wshr/dry	with
w/	carpets
w/w	downtown

Now use the abbreviations you have learned. Practice reading the want ads.

Read each ad. Beside it, write it out using words instead of abbreviations.

1 BR APT, unfurn, elev bldg,
A/C, nr transportation.
Sec dep 987-5032

_____
_____
_____
_____

STU lge furn, pkg,
w/w crp, drps, $250
incl utils. 945-1137

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

WHAT CAN YOU FIND?

Now **you** find some rental housing. Use your newspaper. Cut out ads and paste them in the spaces below. Or copy them in the spaces. Write out each ad to show you know the abbreviations.

ROOM FOR RENT

STUDIO APARTMENT FOR RENT

ONE BEDROOM APARTMENT FOR RENT

HOUSE FOR RENT

MOBILE HOME FOR RENT

Chapter 2

FINDING THE RIGHT PLACE

You are hunting for a place to rent. You have found some places. How should you check them out? How can you tell which is best? How can you make up your mind?

Here are five easy steps. They will help you find the right place for you.

☑ **STEP 1. Check out your finances.**

When you look, know how much you can pay. Remember, rent is just one expense. You must pay for many other things. One good rule: Don't spend more than one week's take-home pay for housing.

Something else to remember:

Sometimes your rent includes everything. Sometimes you must pay for utilities. Sometimes you must pay extra fees.

How much could you pay each month? $_____

Always ask: What is the monthly rent? $_____

Cost of utilities? $_____

Other fees? $_____

What is the total monthly payment? $_____

If the total monthly payment is too much, STOP **Look at another place.**

If you can afford the monthly payment, GO on to step 2.

☑ **STEP 2: Check out your needs and wants.**

No place is perfect. No place will be just what you need. So know what you need most. Ask yourself:

How much space do you need? And what kind of space?

☐ Living space: _____

_____

☐ Other space (storage, parking, garden) _____

_____

What else do you need?

☐ A furnished place? ☐ Desk service? ☐ Laundry machines?

☐ A place close to work? ☐ A place close to a bus line?

☐ A short-term lease? ☐ A place close to school?

_____

_____

_____

What do you want most?

☐ Privacy? ☐ Friendly neighbors? ☐ A safe neighborhood?

_____

_____

_____

As you go through steps 3, 4 and 5, keep asking yourself:

Does this place have what I need **most?** Does it have what I want **most?** If yes, go on to step 3.

GO

☑ **STEP 3: Check out the neighborhood.**

Here's how to do it:

Walk around the neighborhood. Drive or ride a bus. Go at different times of day. Go during the week, and on weekends, too.

Here's what to look for:

Look for answers to these questions. Does the neighborhood have what you need? What you want? You are the only one who can decide.

Who lives in the neighborhood? _____

Is it quiet or noisy? _____

Are there stores or just houses and apartments? _____

Is it a safe neighborhood? _____

Is the neighborhood near your work? _____

Is it near the places that you go most often? _____

Is there good public transportation?

Transportation to work? _____

Transportation for shopping? _____

What kinds of shops are there? _____

What else does the neighborhood offer?

School _____ Recreation _____

Churches _____ Other _____

If you don't like the neighborhood,

. Look somewhere else.

If you do like the neighborhood,

on to step 4.

☑ **STEP 4: Check out the apartment.**

Here's how to do it:

Don't just look. Ask for a floor plan with floor measurements. Or measure room sizes with a tape measure and write down the room sizes.

Try things out. Open and close windows and doors. Flush toilets. Turn the water on and off. Inspect range and refrigerator. Check for cracks in walls or ceilings.

Take notes to help you remember.

Here's what to look for:

How are the rooms laid out? Draw the floor plan. Show where the doors and windows are.

Is it in good condition? YES ☐ NO ☐ Clean? YES ☐ NO ☐

Do the walls need painting? ☐ YES ☐ NO If yes, will they be painted before you move in? ☐ YES ☐ NO

Are the floors in good condition? ☐ YES ☐ NO

If furnished, do you like the furniture? ☐ YES ☐ NO Does it fit your needs? ☐ YES ☐ NO

Is it quiet? ☐ YES ☐ NO Can you hear noises from outside? ☐ YES ☐ NO From inside the building? ☐ YES ☐ NO

How safe is it? Are there locks on windows and doors? ☐ YES ☐ NO Can you put in your own door lock? ☐ YES ☐ NO Is there a peephole in the door? ☐ YES ☐ NO

Could someone get in from a fire escape or balcony? ☐ YES ☐ NO

Are there enough electrical outlets (2-3 per room)? ☐ YES ☐ NO

Is the kitchen clean and free from bugs? ☐ YES ☐ NO Are the range and refrigerator in good working order? ☐ YES ☐ NO

Is the bathroom clean? ☐ YES ☐ NO Are the sink, tub and toilet in good working order? ☐ YES ☐ NO

Are there enough closets and other storage spaces? ☐ YES ☐ NO

If something is really wrong, STOP here. Look for another apartment. If you like the apartment, GO on to step 5.

How big are the rooms?

Room	size

☑ **STEP 5: Check out the building**

Here's how to do it:

- ☐ Walk around the outside of the building.
- ☐ Stand out front and watch who goes in and out.
- ☐ Ride in the elevators.
- ☐ Check the stairs. Are they safe and well-lit?
- ☐ Check the laundry room, the storage area, parking and other common areas.
- ☐ Sit in the lobby.
- ☐ Talk to people who live there.
- ☐ Take notes to help you remember.

Here's what to look for:

Look for answers to these questions.

How many apartments are in the building? _____

Is the building clean, well-lighted and kept in good condition? ☐ YES ☐ NO

What are the tenants like? _____

_____

How safe is the building? Are doors kept locked? ☐ YES ☐ NO
Are the fire exits well marked and easy to get to? ☐ YES ☐ NO

Who runs the building? _____
Does a manager or supervisor live in the building? ☐ YES NO

Are there any "house rules"? (no TV at certain times, etc.) _____

_____

Are pets allowed? _____

Where is mail put when it is delivered? _____

Is there someone to receive packages? _____

Which of these does the building have?

Does it have:	If yes, put a ✓	Tell about them:
separate key for building entrance		
elevator(s)		
lobby		
doorperson		
desk service		
laundry room		
storage area		
parking		
trash disposal		
fire exits		

What apartments are for rent in this building? _____

Other: _____

Now, **you** look for an apartment to rent.

Address of apartment:

_____

Street Apt. Number

How much would it cost to rent?

Is a security deposit required? ☐ YES ☐ NO Amount of deposit: $_____

What is the total monthly payment? Rent $ _____

Utilities $ _____

Other fees $ _____

TOTAL MONTHLY PAYMENT _____

Could you afford the monthly payment? ☐ YES ☐ NO

When is the apartment available? _____

How long is the lease? ☐ 1 year ☐ 2 year ☐ Other: _____

Use pages 17-20 to check out the neighborhood, the apartment and the building.

What do you need most in an apartment? _____

_____

Does this apartment have what you need most? ☐ YES ☐ NO

What do you want most in an apartment? _____

_____

Does this apartment have what you want most? ☐ YES ☐ NO

Chapter 3

BEFORE YOU SIGN

APPLYING FOR A PLACE TO RENT

Usually you must fill out an **application** (ăp plĭ KĀ shŭn). In the application you tell about yourself. You tell how much money you make. You tell about your job. You tell where you live now. The landlord wants to find out if you will be a good tenant. The landlord wants to know if you can pay the rent.

You may also have to make a deposit. The landlord keeps the deposit while he checks up on you.

Before you sign and make a deposit . . .

1. Read the application. Make sure it tells the apartment you want. It should tell what the rent is. It should tell how long you want to live there. Ask questions if you don't understand something.
2. Ask about the deposit. Will you get it back if you change your mind? What if the landlord decides not to rent to you?
3. Be sure to get a **receipt** (rē SĒT) for your deposit, marked "PAID." A receipt is a piece of paper that proves that you made the deposit.
4. Find out how long you will have to wait. When will the landlord tell you that you can rent the apartment?

Suppose the landlord says no . . .

A landlord can turn you down if he thinks that you won't pay the rent. But "fair housing" laws say you can't be turned down for other reasons.

A landlord can not refuse to rent to you because of:

— your race
— your age (if you are of legal age in your state)
— your sex
— whether or not you are married
— your religion
— the country where you were born

Suppose you are turned down. You think it was for one of these reasons. What should you do? Go to your local human relations commission. You can complain. (Look in the white pages of the telephone book. Look under city or state government.) The commission will look into your case. The commission tries to see that landlords obey fair housing laws.

TEST YOURSELF

Circle T if a sentence is true. Circle F if it is false.

1. A landlord can refuse to rent to you because of your race. T F
2. A landlord will check up on you before he rents to you. T F
3. If you make a deposit, you should get a receipt. T F

Before you sign the lease . . .

The landlord says that you can rent the place. There's one more step before you move in. **Read your lease carefully! Make sure that everything in the lease is OK before you sign it!**

Remember, a lease is the agreement between you and your landlord. In it you both agree to do some things. You agree not to do other things. Once you sign it, you have to do what the lease says.

What is a lease?

A lease is the agreement between you and your landlord. In it you both agree to do some things. You agree not to do other things. Once you sign it, you have to do what the lease says.

Who writes the lease?

The lease is written by the landlord. Sometimes if you ask, the landlord will make a change in the lease. But often you can't do more than sign — or say no and look for another apartment.

What does the lease say?

You will find it hard to read a lease. Leases are written a special way. Special legal words are used. You need to know what the lease says. Ask the landlord to explain the lease to you. Find out what you must do. Find out what the landlord must do. The next three pages of this workbook will help you learn what a lease says.

Who signs the lease?

Both you and the landlord must sign the lease. Make sure you get a signed copy. Keep your copy of the lease in a safe place.

TEST YOURSELF

Circle T if a sentence is true. Circle F if it is false.

1. Both landlord and tenant must sign a lease. T F
2. The lease is written by the tenant. T F
3. Leases are easy to read and understand. T F
4. A tenant must be given a signed copy of the lease. T F

WHAT'S IN YOUR LEASE?

Your lease says a lot about the **lessor** (LĚS sŏr). The lessor is another name for your landlord. The lessor owns the place you are renting.

What does <u>your</u> lease say about the lessor?

Who is the lessor?

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone number: _____

What rights does the lessor have?

Can the lessor make rules for tenants? ☐ Yes ☐ No

When can the lessor enter your home? _____

_____

When can the lessor **evict** (ē VĬCT) you? (Make you move out)

_____

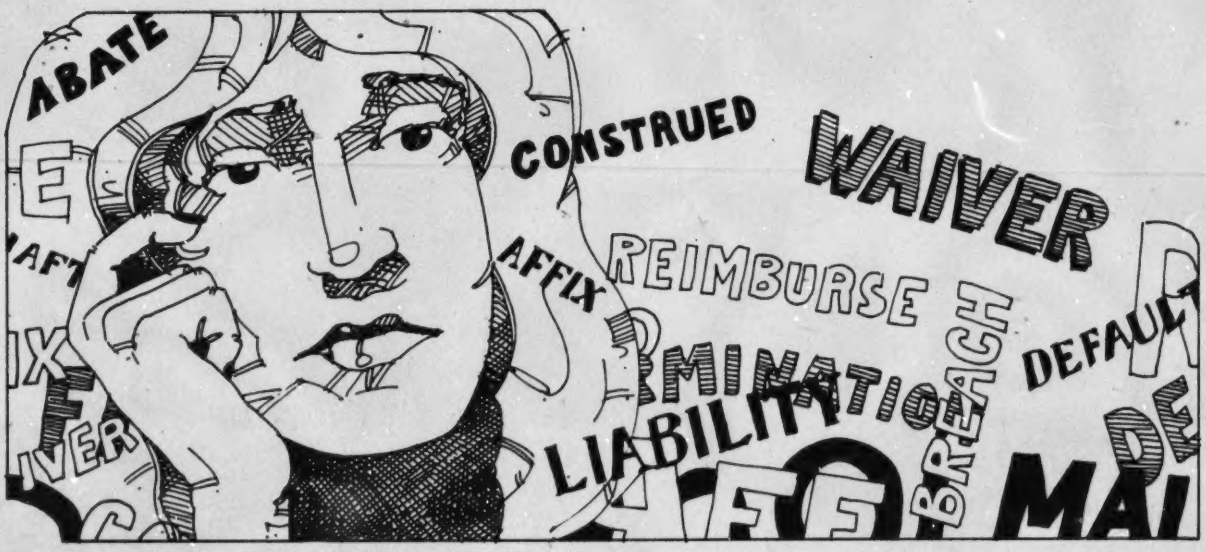
What is the lessor responsible for?

What must the lessor do to keep your home in good condition? _____

_____

What repairs must the lessor make? _____

_____



What does <u>your</u> lease say about you, the lessee?

Your lease says a lot about the **lessee** (lĕ SĒ). That's you! Lessee is another word for tenant.

Is your name written in the lease? ☐ YES ☐ NO

If someone else is renting with you, is his or her name given? ☐ YES ☐ NO

What does the lessee have to pay?

What is the rent? $_____ When must the rent be paid? _____

What happens if you don't pay on time? _____

What other fees must you pay? _____

How much is the security deposit? _____

When and how can you get the deposit back? _____

_____

What are the lessee's rights?

Do you have the right to "enjoy" your home? ☐ YES ☐ NO

Can you make changes or redecorate? ☐ YES ☐ NO _____

Do you have to "waive" or sign away any legal rights? ☐ YES ☐ NO

What is the lessee responsible for?

Do you have to make any repairs? ☐ YES ☐ NO _____

What must you do to keep your home in good condition? _____

_____

What rules must you follow?

What must you do? (Put trash in a certain place, put carpets on the floors, etc.) _____

_____

What are things you can not do? (Have a pet, drive a nail in the wall, have a washing machine, etc.)

_____

Your lease says a lot about the **"demised premises"** (dĭ MĪZED PRĚM ĭ sĕs). Demised means "leased". The demised premises is another way of saying that the place is being rented.

What does <u>your</u> lease say about the premises?

What is being rented?

Address _____ Apt. No._____

Do the premises include any furniture or equipment? ☐ YES ☐ NO _____

Are the premises being rented "as is?" ☐ YES ☐ NO

If yes, is anything missing or in poor shape (scratched floors, etc.)?

_____

If no, what is the landlord going to do (make repairs, paint, etc.)?

_____

Can you change or redecorate? ☐ YES ☐ NO _____

How long will you rent the premises?

From _____ 19___ to _____ 19___

Other things to check

Can you renew the lease if you want to stay longer? ☐ YES ☐ NO

Can you "sublet" (rent to someone else)? ☐ NO ☐ YES, if you _____

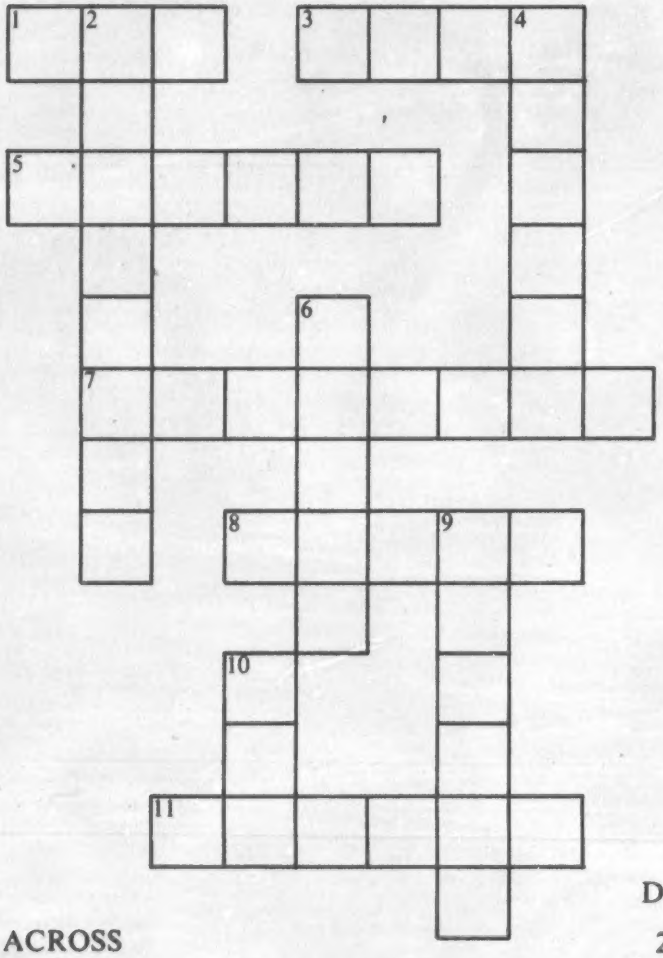
_____

How can you "break" or get out of your lease? _____

TEST YOURSELF

Do these words puzzle you?

apt.	premises
lease	rent
lessor	security
lessee	sublet
one	rules
	tenant



ACROSS

1. "1 BR _____ for rent"
3. Money that a tenant pays each month.
5. Another word for landlord.
7. Make a _____ deposit.
8. Agreement between landlord and tenant.
11. Another word for tenant.

DOWN

2. What the tenant rents.
4. Person who rents a landlord's apartment or house.
6. A lease has _____ that tenants must follow.
9. A _____ clause lets a tenant rent to someone else.
10. Deposit _____ month's rent.

Chapter 4

YOU AND YOUR LANDLORD

Newsperson: Tell me, Mr. Landlord. What's your idea of perfect tenants?

Landlord: That's easy. Perfect tenants pay rent on time. They don't mind if I raise the rent. They wait till I get around to fixing things. They don't ask me to paint or spend money. And they stay forever so I don't have to find other tenants.

Newsperson: Tell me, Ms. Tenant. What's your idea of a perfect landlord?

Ms. Tenant: Well, perfect landlords don't care if I'm a little late with the rent. They don't raise the rent. They fix things right away. They spend money to keep the place looking nice. They let me move out whenever I want to.

What are Mr. Landlord and Ms. Tenant saying? Check one:

1. ☐ Tenants and landlords are friends.
2. ☐ Tenants and landlords want different things.
3. ☐ Tenants and landlords are perfect.

What are some things you expect your landlord to do?

_____

_____

_____

What are some things your landlord expects you to do?

_____

_____

_____

WHAT IF THERE'S A PROBLEM?

Paul rents his apartment. He has a problem. The stove in his apartment does not work right. There is no heat in the oven. What should Paul do?

____ He should call a repair service.

____ He should try to fix it himself.

____ He should call his landlord.

Paul should call his landlord. The landlord is responsible for keeping the stove working. Paul is the tenant. He is responsible for telling the landlord about the problem. If he called a repair service, he might have to pay the bill. If he tried to fix the stove himself, he might damage the stove. He might hurt himself.

Paul tells his landlord. The landlord sends a repair service to fix the stove.

BUT — what if the landlord wouldn't fix the stove?

Laws about housing are local laws. Your state and city have laws about housing. They are called housing codes. Housing codes tell landlords what they must give tenants. The codes give tenants some rights and protections.

If landlords do not make repairs or give tenants safe, clean housing, tenants can complain. They can complain to the state or city housing office. The state or city can make landlords obey the law. Paul could complain to the city housing office.

Many tenants have problems with their landlords. It is hard for one tenant to make a landlord do something. If a tenant complains, the landlord might say that he will not renew the tenant's lease. Some tenants are afraid that the landlord might make them move out of their apartment. In some places tenants join together. They form tenant groups. They try to make landlords improve conditions. They try to keep landlords from raising rents. They try to get more rights for tenants.

Do you know of any tenant groups? ☐ NO ☐ YES _____

TEST YOURSELF

Circle T if a sentence is true. Circle F is a sentence is false.

1. Local housing codes tell what landlords must give tenants. T F
2. A tenant is usually responsible for making repairs. T F
3. Tenants are more powerful than landlords. T F

WHEN THE LEASE IS UP

Connie rents her apartment. She has lived there for eleven months. Soon her one-year lease will be up. Connie wants to stay on for another year. She wants to sign a new lease.

Connie's landlord says she can stay another year. But she will have to pay more rent. Her landlord sends her a paper to sign. It is an agreement to let her stay another year. This is called "extending a lease." The agreement looks like this:

LEASE EXTENSION AGREEMENT

The lease made the 15th day of April, 1979, between John Grimes, Landlord, and Constance Lee, Tenant, covering premises 1243 Beech Drive, Apt. 4B, Anytown, Anystate, is hereby extended with all its present provisions and covenants (including any changes still in effect) for a period of 1 year, beginning on the 15th day of April, 1980, and ending fully on the 14th day of April, 1981, but with the following changes: Monthly rental to be increased to $260, effective April 15, 1980.

_____ _____

Landlord
John Grimes

Date

_____ _____

Tenant
Constance Lee

Date

Connie reads the agreement. It tells that her lease is extended for another year. When does the year begin?_____ When does the year end?_____

How much rent will Connie pay each month?$_____ Is the rent higher than she paid the first year?

☐ YES ☐ NO

Connie needs to sign the agreement. Circle the place where she should sign.

The landlord has sent two copies of the agreement. Connie signs both. Her landlord will sign both. He will send her a signed copy that she can keep.

Connie's friend Tom also rents his apartment. His lease will soon be up. He wants to stay in the apartment. But he is not sure how long he will stay. He may move to another city soon. His landlord will let him stay on without signing a lease for another year. Tom will rent on a "month-to-month" basis. This means he must tell his landlord one month before he leaves. Tom likes this. But the landlord can raise the rent any time. Connie's landlord can't raise her rent again for another year.

Some months later Connie gets some good news. She has a new job with an airline. She will be a flight attendant. But she can not keep her apartment. She must go to flight attendant school in another city. She does not know where she will live after that. The airline will tell her where to live.

Connie's lease will not be up for nine months. She talks to her friend Tom. He says that maybe she could sublet the apartment. This means Connie would find someone to live there. That person would pay her, and Connie would pay the landlord. Connie would still be responsible for keeping the apartment in good condition. Connie looks in her lease. It says she cannot sublet the apartment.

32

Connie talks to her landlord. She wants to "break" her lease. She does not want to pay rent for the rest of the year. The landlord says he will try to rent the apartment to someone else. Connie agrees to help the landlord find a new tenant. She will let people look at her apartment.

Connie writes her landlord a letter. She keeps a copy for herself. This is the letter:

Ms. Constance Lee
1243 Beech Drive, Apt. 4B
Anytown, Anystate
June 20, 1980

Mr. John Grimes
12 East Water Street
Anytown, Anystate

Dear Mr. Grimes:

As you know, I rent Apt. 4B at 1243 Beech Drive. I am planning to vacate the apartment on August 14, 1980. My lease runs until April 14, 1981.

I will try to help you find a new tenant.

Very truly yours,

Constance Lee

Constance Lee

Connie is lucky. Someone wants to rent her apartment. The landlord will let her "break" her lease. Connie will not have to pay rent after August 14.

On August 14, Connie moves her things out. She cleans the apartment very carefully. She leaves the apartment in good condition.

Connie goes to see her landlord. She gives him the key to her apartment. She asks for her security deposit back.

The landlord says that he must look at the apartment. He must see that everything is okay. Then she can have her money. Connie does not like this, but she has to wait. A week later she gets a check from the landlord. The landlord has returned her security deposit.

WHAT DID CONNIE DO?

In the story Connie did these things. But the order has been mixed up.

Put numbers to show the correct order.

____ Connie moves out

____ Connie extends her lease for another year

____ Connie asks for her security deposit

____ Connie cleans her apartment

____ Connie gives her key to the landlord

____ Connie's landlord returns her deposit

____ Connie writes her landlord that she is leaving